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A MORE APPROPRIATE PROCEDURE FOR NAMING SASQUATCH

MICHAEL HEANEY
Department of Catalogues, Bodleian Library,
University of Oxford, Parks Road, Oxford, England OX1 3BG, U.K.

ABSTRACT: Krantz (1986) assigned footprint casts of Sasquatch (Bigfoot) to the type specimen of the Chinese fossil species *Gigantopithecus blacki*. This procedure will result in future Sasquatch evidence having to be tested against the tooth which serves as the type specimen. A more appropriate procedure would be to erect the Sasquatch footprint casts as the type specimen for a new North American species, *Gigantopithecus canadensis*. The cladistic analyses of Jeffrey H. Schwartz, and their implications for the Sasquatch-*Gigantopithecus* equation, are briefly reviewed.

The purpose of this paper is to address Grover Krantz's scientific naming of the Sasquatch (Bigfoot) (Krantz 1986), and the amplification of his thinking on the topic (*ISC Newsletter* 1987a, 1987b).

The formal description by Krantz (1986) was based on a paper given at the symposium "Cryptozoology: The Search for Unknown or Supposedly Extinct Animals," held as part of the III International Congress of Systematic and Evolutionary Biology, held at the University of Sussex, Brighton, England, in July of 1985. In that original paper, he proposed the reassignment of the name *Gigantopithecus blacki*—a large fossil primate from China—to the type specimen represented by the casts—taken at Elk Wallow (Walla Walla) in 1982—of the footprints of a supposed Sasquatch. This procedure was ruled inadmissible under the rules of taxonomic nomenclature established by the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature (1985). Effectively, Krantz had to assign the footprints to the existing type specimen of *G. blacki,* or erect a new species based on his proposed type specimen.

It appears from the subsequent article (Krantz 1986) that he chose the former course. He still wishes to equate the Sasquatch with *G. blacki,* and is prepared to "downgrade" his footprint casts accordingly, stating that, if future evidence proves him wrong in the species identification, then the Sasquatch should be renamed *Gigantopithecus canadensis.* (The title of the article reflects his original position: to be accurate, it should not have been titled "A Species *Named* from Footprints," but, rather, "A Species *Identified* from Footprints.")

This is a sadly mistaken course. First, as Krantz himself states, it reverses the normal nomenclatural procedure. The rules of nomenclature have been developed not just to make life complicated, but to solve real and practical problems of describing the natural world, so that, literally, we can know what we are talking about. The practical consequences of Krantz's decision

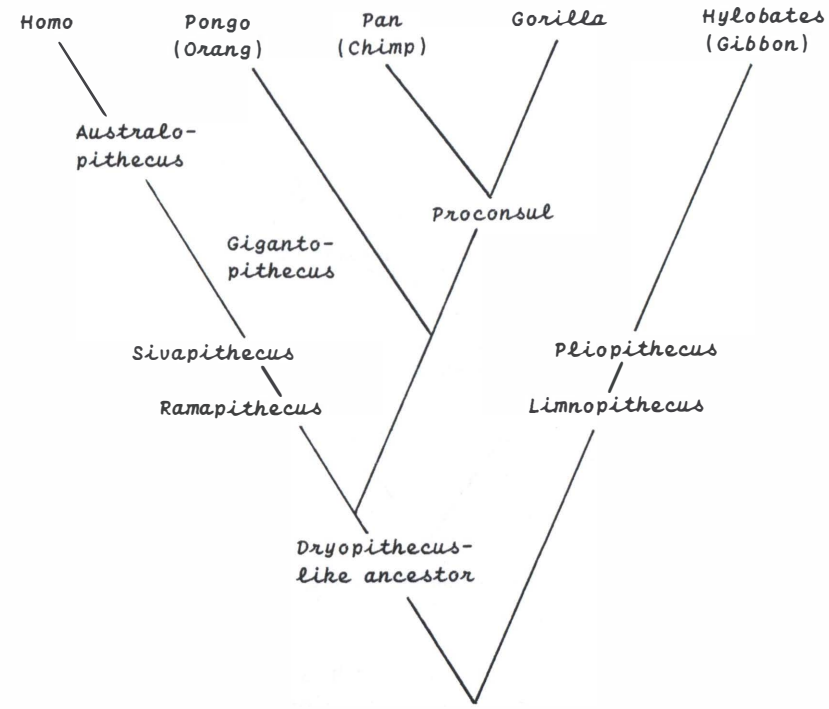

FIG. 1.—A formerly accepted scheme of the relationships among fossil and living hominoids. (Based on Schwartz [1987].)

include the difficulty that any new Sasquatch evidence now has to be tested against the fossil tooth which is the type specimen of *G. blacki.* It would be much more sensible to adopt the nomenclaturally correct course, and erect the footprints as the type specimen for a new species, *G. canadensis.* This immediately makes it much easier to test other physical evidence for the Sasquatch against the very good evidence Krantz now holds. It is, in any case, very difficult to make a good case for the precise identification of footprints made in modern America with a tooth from half a world and a thousand millennia away.

I see no practical use in Krantz's present procedure, other than as a statement of faith in the outcome of future research. He gives no reason, for instance, for preferring to identify the Sasquatch with *G. blacki* rather than with *G. bilaspurensis.* His reasons for the precise identification of Sasquatch with *G. blacki* are that "the possibility of two gigantic, bipedal higher primates [sic] species can be considered very unlikely" (Krantz 1986: 97), and that "the natural biological condition of species is to remain unchanged indefinitely, unless outside forces intervene" (*ISC Newsletter* 1987b: 2).

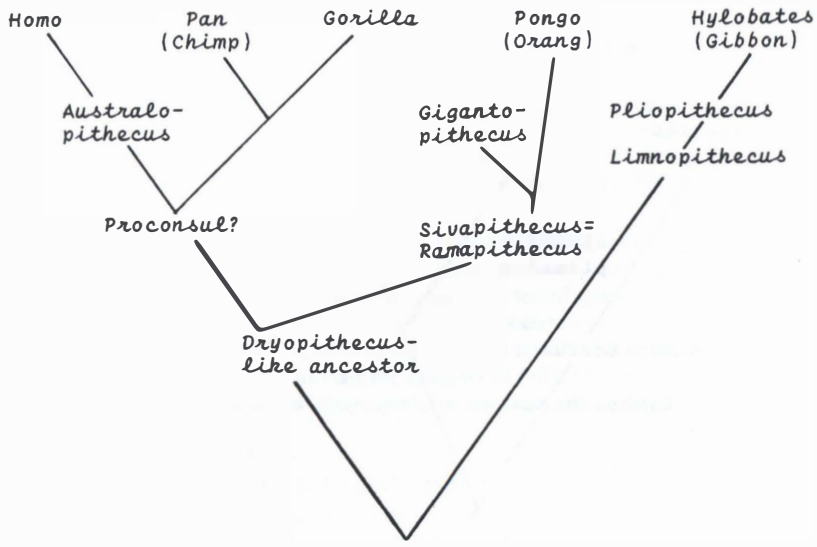

FIG. 2.—A more recent scheme of the relationships among fossil and living hominoids. (Based on Schwartz [1987].)

To take the second point first, if Sasquatch is *G. blacki,* then it has undergone a migration from Asia to America, a probable change of climate from tropical to temperate, and may even have survived several glaciations. As for the first point, how many people could distinguish between a tiger and a lion on the basis of a few teeth or mandible parts of one and three footprints of the other? Krantz simply does not have the physical evidence to make the equation he wishes; he should, instead, make the best use of the evidence he has, and name the Sasquatch *G. canadensis* on the basis of his evidence.

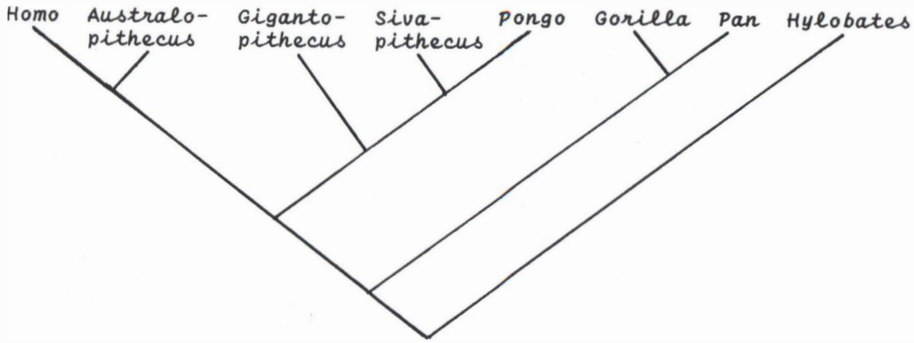

FIG. 3.—Schwartz's proposed scheme of the relationships among fossil and living hominoids. (Based on Schwartz [1984b].)

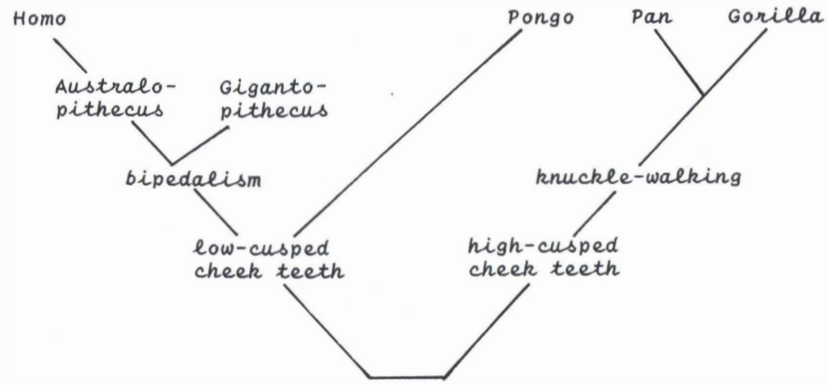

FIG. 4.—The author's proposed scheme of the relationships among some fossil and living hominoids. It provides a single ancestry for both the characteristic human/orang dentition and for bipedalism.

In a published interview, Krantz (*ISC Newsletter* 1987b: 2) states that he is "of the minority school which considers *Gigantopithecus* to have been a hominid." What he does not state is which model of hominid ancestry he favors; and, in particular, whether he has considered the views recently put forward by Jeffrey H. Schwartz, which have direct bearing on the status of *Gigantopithecus* in the hominid line. Schwartz (1984a, 1984b, 1987) has proposed that the orang-utan is the ape most closely related to humans. The starting point of his analysis is the dentition of the hominoids, and his approach is cladistic. His characterization of theories of hominid evolution appear as Figs. 1 and 2. Schwartz's proposed scheme, showing only phylogenetic relationships, appears as Fig. 3.

The realization that *Gigantopithecus* dentition has affinities with that of the orang-utan is what has removed this fossil form from the generally accepted view of hominid ancestry. What I have not seen mentioned in the literature is that, by altering Schwartz's phylogeny in just one particular, we can provide a single ancestry for both the characteristic human/orang dentition and for bipedalism, as shown in Fig. 4.

These schemata grossly oversimplify Schwartz's position and his evidence, of course; and I am neither paleontologist nor systematist. I do hope, however, that someone better qualified than I—perhaps Krantz himself—will reassess the position of *Gigantopithecus* in light of Schwartz's theories.

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